

The Shallowford Trust

Chair's Annual report 2017-18.

You will be pleased to know that at East Shallowford we are saving the NHS money.

A recent study shows that users of green spaces are likely to be healthier and make less visits to their GP.

You will also be pleased to know that the Duke of Cambridge recently reminded his listeners of something we have long been committed to, that 'nature is fundamental to the health of a nation.' You will not be surprised to learn that erudite articles in academic journals, writing about 'how urbanization influences engagement with nature', are asking today the same questions Elizabeth Braund raised years ago, and that the work of the Shallowford Trust is continuing to address today. There has perhaps never been a time when the relevance of this work is as apparent as it is today, and when key words in the Shallowford dictionary as 'lung for the city' and 'heart of the matter' are as meaningful as ever.

This brief report won't go into the headlines detailed elsewhere in the Trust Manager's and in the Farm Manager's reports, but rather I want to sketch with some broad strokes.

We have been here a long time in this place.

One of the delights of entertaining visitors is to point out the green markings on the wall in the cross passage, the great granite hearth, the now hidden eleventh century wooden threshold to the old homestead entrance and share with them the historical context of this home and their visit.

Now, of course, we can point to a chestnut stake standing in the earth in the front field, and say that families have been living and farming at East Shallowford for three thousand years or more.

And that we will be here for many years more.

This spring we welcomed baby Shane to the farm, whose father Shane has stayed here many times, from boy to man. Grandfather Shane has also visited several times, and his wife arrived in one of Elizabeth and Rosemary's first groups in the 1970s. And believe it or not, baby Shane's great grandfather Tony used to drive the minibuses from London to East Shallowford.

We have been here a long time in this place, and it is our vision and intention to be here for many years to come for many more groups of children and families to visit.

That remains the core commitment of Trustees and staff alike.

East Shallowford in on the up, is definitely on the up.

The new animal barns are up and universally admired – especially with satisfied grunts from the main lodgers. Field walls have been carefully and impressively rebuilt, and the ancient pound is being restored. Planning permission was finally granted without contention in the autumn, and the slow but crucial process of fine tuning the designs to both conditions and budget is progressing, as we move to the next stage of new buildings going up. Now the Trust is in a new phase – to find the further funds that are required to match our reserves and to match our aspiration for the development of this special project.

It is five years since the death of our founder, and every year has come with its challenges, and with fluctuations of leadership, as Trustees have moved on or have joined. The current band of directors, combined with Shallowford Trust staff and volunteers have proved to be an effective and seasoned team to take the opportunities that have arisen; **but there is no standing still**, and to seize the future we will need to seek the renewal and recruitment of our leadership team in the short and medium term.

East Shallowford is a beautiful place. Its setting in the West Webburn valley is such a special thing; but it is **the heart of the work** that is its crowning glory – the visitor group experience. A glimpse at

the testimonial page on the website will reveal some choice visitor quotations, from 'what an awesome day', to 'happier today than I have been for a long time', to 'Jacuzzi of love' (!?). A look at the diary for the next few weeks illustrates the opportunities ahead for the Trust. On Tuesday 29th May, the first residential school group for many years outside of the Providence House network is coming for four days. On Friday 1st June, eight young people from London come to combine working party tasks with team building challenges. On Tuesday 5th June the convoy of vehicles with piglets, calves, sheep and poultry will descend on Clapham Junction for four days of Farm to City, bringing Shallowford to London, and with it a whole sack-full of learning for participating children, as well as repeated opportunities to promote the good work. In some ways this calendar of activities highlights the continued task of the Shallowford Trust: to further develop its historic work with Providence House, to bring increasing numbers of new groups to the farm, and to promote the project and its value far and wide.

A tough ask?

To quote Nelson Mandela, 'the task always seems impossible until it is finally done.'

Or perhaps we might want to say with the book of Proverbs, 'Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established'.

Robert Musgrave MBE
Chair the Shallowford Trust.

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